Local Belgian dialect dates to 1850s: visitor

TOWN OF BRUSSELS — A heart specialist from Belgium visiting this area emphasized an immediate need to preserve the Flemish and French Wallon dialects of the language.

"There should be a record made of the language treasure here before it's lost," said Dr. Carl Callebaut, cardiologist at the European Common Market Headquarters in Brussels. "You have a jewel here, please don't waste it or lose it."

Dr. Callebaut explained the Belgian descendants of the area speak the "common root" of the language as it was in 1850 and before. "The modern Wallon spoken in Belgium is a little different than what's spoken here," he said.

Callebaut strongly advocated the formation of linguistic fellowships to examine the differences between the European and American dialects of the Belgian language. He proposed taping the original form of the language as it is spoken here as a means of preservation. He also felt arrangements should be made between Wisconsin and Belgium universities for an exchange of linguistically interested students.

Dr. Callebaut was a guest of Mr. and Mrs. George Jeanquart last week while on a world tour which included stops in Holland, Japan, South Korea, the North Pole, Hawaii and California. He got in touch with the Jeanquarts through a mutual friend in France and stopped over for a few days on his way to Miami. Callebaut planned on arriving back in Belgium near the end of October.

The names of people and cities made the European native "feel really at home here." He noted the names of towns in this area, specifically Rosiere, Namur and Brussels, were spelled similarly in Europe. The location of the three villages in Kewaunee and Door counties also reflected their European counterparts. "This is a unique triangle in geography a miraculous duplication," he said.

"I am obliged to speak four languages every day," Dr. Callebaut said of his work at the Common Market headquarters. "Hopefully, someday it will be two."

"As long as it's not Russian," he added. "You know what I mean?"

Oct 21, 1983

DR. CARL CALLEBUT, center, a heart specialist from Belgium visiting Mr. and Mrs. George Jeanquart in the town of Brussels, has urged local residents of Belgian descent to record and preserve the dialect spoken here. It is, he said, the common root of the Flemish and Wallon tongues now spoken in Belgium, and dates back to the middle of the last century.

— MARV BINS PHOTO